

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 12, 2012

Agenda Item: Ear Mountain WMA grazing lease renewal – Salmond Ranch

Division: Fish & Wildlife, Wildlife Bureau **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule/Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

Beginning in 1991, a rest-rotation grazing system was established with the Salmond Ranch for the 2,210-acre north pasture to improve vegetative quality on Ear Mountain WMA. The proposed action is directed at helping to maintain the vigor of vegetation on the Ear Mountain WMA for the benefit of wildlife. Year-round and seasonal forage for mule deer and bighorn sheep and other big game will be maintained. Public hunting access on the lessee's property will also be incorporated within the grazing lease.

Public Involvement Process & Results

In March 2009, FWP Region 4 issued a draft environmental assessment and solicited public comment for the proposed Ear Mountain Wildlife Management Grazing Agreement with the Salmond Ranch. One public comment was taken regarding the effects of grazing on non-hybridized westslope cutthroat that are present in the North Fork Willow Creek located within the northern portion of this pasture. Based on the draft grazing management plan FWP determined that grazing would not have a significant impact on the riparian habitat and westslope cutthroat population. No changes have occurred to the system or affected environment since 2009 and an amended Decision Notice has been adopted, contingent on commission approval.

Alternatives and Analysis

The alternative would be to not utilize the grazing management plan on the Ear Mountain MWMA. Lower quality and less abundant forage production on the WMA would be expected over the long-term. The Salmond Ranch would be required to find additional grazing pasture elsewhere.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP R4 would implement a grazing plan on the WMA. The plan would use cattle grazing as a management tool to maintain vegetative quality on the WMA by stimulating regrowth of native grasses and forbs for the benefit of wildlife. The Salmond Ranch would benefit from the availability of early and late summer pasture for their cattle. Public hunting opportunity would be allowed through the grazing agreement on the lessee's property.

Proposed Motion

I move to renew the Ear Mountain WMA rotational grazing system agreement with the Salmond Ranch for the 2012–2014 period.